

APOLOGETIC SNAPSHOT I

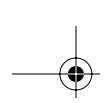
The Scope of Christian Apologetics

AN AMERICAN IN Swiss lederhosen stands at the podium of a large university auditorium in New England. The students filling the seats are facing the Vietnam draft and what they see as arrogant American aggression in Southeast Asia. Instead of poring over their standard textbooks and writing their assigned papers, they have been devouring the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche, Herbert Marcuse and Franz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Instead of pouring acid into water in their chemistry labs and measuring the rise in temperature, they have been engaging in campus protests, threatening to take over buildings and shut down the administration. What will go on for the next couple of hours, however, will be brilliant apologetics geared precisely to the character and temperament of these angry and often despairing students.¹

In a top research university in Chicago, a radical theologian and an evangelical historian face off in a debate over whether God is dead.²

An obscure British literary scholar, veteran of World War I, speaks over BBC radio to an audience whose country is again involved in a world war, discussing the viability of Christian faith in a world stricken with violent conflict. Later these lectures become the twentieth century's most read intellectual defense of "mere" Christianity.³





A young British cleric sits at his desk and pens a clear exposition of the nature and character of Jesus and his role in setting humanity free from the guilt of sin. The result is one of the clearest explanations of why one should place faith in this Jesus, the very Son of God.⁴

In the past fifty years, tens of thousands of Christian students all over the world have repeated and elaborated on the arguments of such apologists as these. Just what is it that all these people have in common? What is apologetics? We will begin with the view of the New Testament, the ultimate source of all good apologetics, and then take up both the values and limits of apologetics in the modern world.

